

Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (CIMP)

Improvement Workplan and Status Report for Federal US-OSEP Monitoring of Special Education in Virginia

This Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process work plan addresses improvements needed as identified in Virginia's Self-Assessment. Virginia's areas of strength are not included in this work plan. Virginia's Self-Assessment is available on the Department of Education's Web site at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/Sped/selfpage.html>.

Desired Outcome:

Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment (FAPE in the LRE) – All children with disabilities receive a FAPE in the LRE that promotes a high quality education and prepares them for higher education, employment, or independent living after they exit school.

Baseline Information: Self-Assessment Findings	Improvement Strategies	Evidence of Change and Benchmarks
<p><u>Where we are now-</u> <i>What has the state/steering committee concluded based upon the review of available data, about the state's performance and results for children with disabilities and their families?</i></p> <p><u>Areas of Noncompliance</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The VDOE's monitoring of local school divisions found situations across the state of noncompliance in the area having extended school year services available across all categories and severities of disability. For the period of 1998-99, the federal program monitoring of local school divisions cited eight of 20 school divisions monitored; and in 1999-00 six of 25 school divisions were cited for not having appropriate extended school year services. During that time period there was one due process case where the hearing officer ruled against the school division on the issue of extended school year services. Public survey comments expressed concerns as to whether parents were informed about extended school year services through the individualized education program (IEP). 2. The Virginia Department of Education's federal program monitoring found some local school divisions have been cited as out of compliance for not having a continuum of placement options 	<p><u>How we will get there -</u> <i>What efforts/strategies will enable the state to improve from the baseline to evidence of change goals and benchmarks?</i></p> <p><u>State Systems Level Structures and Supports</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Revise the monitoring process to collect and examine LEA data on continuum of placement options, including the number of students with different disability classifications receiving academic instruction in the general education setting, and extended school year (ESY) services. Based upon analysis of data, provide for targeted technical assistance to ensure program compliance and improvement. This process may incorporate personnel development and sanctions to ensure timely and effective compliance. B. Disseminate to LEAs a periodic summary of state monitoring issues on least restrictive environment, extended school year services, functional behavior assessment & intervention plans. C. Develop/update and disseminate LRE technical assistance and guidance documents. 	<p><u>What it looks like where we are going-</u> <i>What evidence of change will show that the state has achieved the desired long-range effect(s)? What benchmarks will enable the state to measure the short-term effects of the improvement strategies in achieving the evidence of change goals?</i></p> <p><u>Evidence of Change</u></p> <p>Beginning with baseline data from 2002, there will be a 5% increase each year, in the percent of students with disabilities completing and graduating from school.</p> <p><u>Benchmarks</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There will be an increase in students with disabilities who receive some or all of their special education in integrated settings. 2. There will be an increase in the number of the state's Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments passed by students with disabilities. 3. There will be an increase in the number of students passing the state's alternate assessment.

Baseline Information: Self-Assessment Findings	Improvement Strategies	Evidence of Change and Benchmarks
<p>available. In 1998, four of 21 school divisions monitored were cited; in 1999 five of 20 monitored were cited; and in 2000 three of 25 were cited and four were cited on children not being served in an age-appropriate environment. Public input raised concerns that for certain students, placement decisions are narrowly defined, that the schools start with the self-contained placement option, rather than less restrictive considerations, that there was no continuum of services for some students, and that inclusion creates a barrier to more restrictive placements. Within inclusive settings, a lack of needed supports was reported. Another concern was that achievement accountability pressures are a barrier to general education teachers accepting students with disabilities in their classes.</p> <p>3. For the 1999-00 period, the Virginia Department of Education's federal program monitoring of local school divisions cited nine of 25 school divisions reviewed in the area of having appropriate functional behavior assessment and behavior plans provided to children with disabilities. The number of founded complaints in this area was one for 1998-99 and five for 1999-00.</p> <p>4. VDOE's monitoring system has found school divisions who are out of compliance with regard to meeting required timelines for conducting evaluations or reevaluations. Data were not available to determine if this is an issue for children transitioning from the Part C Early Intervention services system.</p> <p><u>Status: Areas of Noncompliance</u> As of August 2002, tracking charts document corrective action of identified deficiencies within established timelines, except where extensions were granted. Documentation is on file in the Office of Federal Program Monitoring.</p>	<p>D. Develop a mechanism in the monitoring process to disaggregate children transitioning from Part C Early Intervention system to determine if there are problems in conducting timely evaluations. Systems identified with noncompliance issues will receive targeted technical assistance.</p> <p><u>Local/Community Systems Level Structures and Supports</u></p> <p>E. LEA instructional leaders implement effective practices for ESY, addressing student behavior and connect training to the local monitoring findings.</p>	<p>4. The number of students with disabilities graduating with a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma will increase.</p> <p>5. There will be a decrease in the percent of students with disabilities who drop out of school.</p> <p>6. There will be an increase in the percent of full time equivalent personnel employed and personnel contracted to provide special education and related services who are fully qualified for the position assigned.</p>

Baseline Information: Self-Assessment Findings	Improvement Strategies	Evidence of Change and Benchmarks
<p><u>Areas Needing Improvement</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Public input suggests that the new modified standard diploma created by the state Board of Education in 2000, although it does not end the entitlement to special education, is an important addition to the diploma options. School personnel need more specific information to be able to offer this diploma by spring 2001. The initiatives that are generated by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) may be considered as areas of strength. However, public input suggested that all school personnel need more information and training. Input also suggests that the public is not aware or knowledgeable of the VDOE initiatives. Public comment from some parents noted concern that assistive technology and specialized materials for students with visual impairments (or blind) are not available to the extent needed or on a timely basis. Although more students with disabilities in Virginia graduated from high school from 1997 to 1999, improvement is needed to further reduce the dropout rates of students with disabilities. The dropout rate for students with disabilities is greater than for students without disabilities; the difference (from one year to the next for each population) is less than one percentage point for the past two years. From public input focus groups, some parents indicated that some of the T/TACs did not encourage as much parent access as did others. Since then, the T/TACs have addressed this problem and parents across the state have access to the services at each center on a more consistent basis. 	<p><u>State Systems Level Structures and Supports</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and disseminate model courses for implementing the Modified Standard Diploma (MSD). Develop/update guidance documents to include information about the implications and connections between diplomas, SOL testing, accommodations/modifications, and post school options. Assess training/ information needs and select effective practice options for solving academic and behavior problems in early stages. Promote specific training for general and special education teachers to address challenging behavior of students with disabilities in general education settings. Determine if the state-funded/supported activity is addressing the local and school personnel (including paraprofessionals) training and information needs regarding assistive technology, universal design, and specialized materials for students with visual impairments. Explore mechanisms for T/TACs to reach parents more consistently across the state to inform them about services and supports offered to parents through T/TACs. 	

Baseline Information: Self-Assessment Findings	Improvement Strategies	Evidence of Change and Benchmarks
<p>6. During 1998-99, instances of long-term suspension for students with disabilities are greater than for students without disabilities (two cases per thousand more). During that same period (1998-99), instances of expulsion for students with disabilities are also greater for students with disabilities than students without disabilities (.11 cases per thousand more). The difference in the expulsion rates for students with and without disabilities is less than the difference between the long-term suspension rates. Therefore, the state should focus on prevention programs to reduce the long-term suspension rates of students with disabilities. Public comment indicated that teachers and administrators need access to information addressing positive behavior intervention, including functional behavior assessment and behavior intervention planning. Public comments indicated perceptions that teachers lack the appropriate skills to address challenging behavior of students with disabilities in general settings and activities.</p>	<p><u>Local Community Systems Level Structures and Supports</u></p> <p>E. LEA general and special education instructional leaders collaborate in the development and dissemination of model instructional programs to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - achievement of students with disabilities and recognition of those achievements - increasing the graduation rate - implementing the new modified standard diploma - supporting students with disabilities in the SOL remedial programs. <p><u>Personnel Issues (recruitment, training and support)</u></p> <p>F. Provide for training to address all educators' needs to work with students who have behavior that interferes with academic achievement, specifically when students are in general education settings. Target training and information in a coordinated way, especially to personnel who are not accessing the available opportunities through the T/TAC and other state, regional, and local activities. Training topics can include functional behavior assessment & intervention planning, differentiated instruction, and provision of services in alternative education settings.</p>	

Baseline Information: Self-Assessment Findings	Improvement Strategies	Evidence of Change and Benchmarks
<p>7. Public input from the Part C early intervention self-assessment noted that there is not sufficient data available to determine the extent of training on transitioning children from the Part C services system.</p> <p>8. Participation of students with disabilities in the SOL assessment program decreased from 1998 to 1999. As a group, students' with disabilities SOL test proficiency levels are lower than students without disabilities. Through public input focus group interviews, some local school administrators noted that the SOL tests need improvement.</p> <p>9. From public input focus groups, some teachers noted concerns that SOL testing and school accreditation impact general education teachers' acceptance of students with disabilities in their classes.</p>	<p><u>Implementation Procedures</u></p> <p>G. Information is available so that local administrators provide information to teachers on an on-going basis about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practical effective options for extended school year services - Options for how to solve academic and behavior problems in early stages - Specialized materials and assistive technology from various agencies/sources - Effective alternative programs - Effective research-based models of SOL remediation. <p><u>State Systems Level Structures and Supports</u></p> <p>H. Collaborate with the Infant Toddler Connection lead agency to provide guidance information to address transition from early intervention services to special education.</p> <p>I. Continue to gather and analyze data on participation and performance of students with disabilities on state assessments. Use the data to study participation and performance trends. Continue to collaborate with the assessment committees on assessment needs of students with disabilities. Investigate improvement needs in the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP).</p> <p>J. Disseminate to parents, information of training opportunities addressing state assessments.</p>	

Baseline Information: Self-Assessment Findings	Improvement Strategies	Evidence of Change and Benchmarks
<p>10. Although the public input noted that special education is provided at no cost to parents, public input suggests that services are limited by school budgets and parents have to supplement school services through private providers. Some parents indicated that the cost of due process hearings presents a barrier to parents who might benefit from using this system to resolve conflict.</p> <p><u>Status – Training and Technical Assistance</u></p> <p>Behavior technical assistance documents were developed and distributed during 2000-2001. Statewide training of trainers was conducted Spring 2002 addressing functional behavior assessment, behavior plans, and assistive supports. T/TACs continue to address, and plan for, training opportunities in behavior and academic supports as documented in T/TAC reports.</p> <p>Superintendent’s memos on additional Board-approved courses and guidelines for the Modified Standard Diploma were issued.</p> <p>T/TACs’ operating procedures for parent access were addressed for consistency across the system during 2000 project directors’ meetings resulting in revised mission statement. The T/TAC On-Line system is under development. It will showcase effective practices from</p>	<p>K. Identify LEAs with high state assessment pass rates to investigate and disseminate effective practices that lead to improved achievement of students with disabilities. Ensure that information and training opportunities are available to teachers on improving the performance of students with disabilities on state assessments.</p> <p>L. Evaluate the state’s mediation system to determine strengths and areas needing improvement in relation to resolving disputes and participant satisfaction. Assess if mediation reduces the perceived barriers to resolving conflict</p> <p><u>Implementation Procedures</u></p> <p>M. Local administrators and teachers consistently inform parents of free and low cost legal services when FAPE is at issue.</p>	

Baseline Information: Self-Assessment Findings	Improvement Strategies	Evidence of Change and Benchmarks
<p>development. It will showcase effective practices from local long-range planning sites (scheduled for Fall 2002). T/TAC On-Line will be equally accessible to school personnel and parents.</p> <p>Information on the benefits of the Instructional Support Team (IST) model was disseminated to LEA administrators at the VCASE Conference May 2001. State support of IST sites was increased for 2002.</p> <p>Staff in the Offices of Special Education and Student Services are participating in the local school accreditation Academic Review process. The Local Improvement Plan reports are undergoing review and compilation to identify and disseminate local effective practices.</p> <p>VDOE's state improvement grants are addressing program evaluation. The aim of the evaluation is to create a culture that supports managing for results –collecting data about what we do to determine what's working and not working and making continuous improvement decisions. To date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Special education state staff adopted a training activity and participant evaluation tool - Budget process includes planning for specified levels of evaluation of projects and products - the Local Improvement Plan program is undergoing evaluation - agency staff will be trained in using local data (Sept. 2002) <p>Statewide training on VA's Alternate Assessment Program occurred in Fall 2000 and 2001 and August 2002.</p>		

Baseline Information: Self-Assessment Findings	Improvement Strategies	Evidence of Change and Benchmarks
<p><u>Areas Needing Improvement, continued:</u></p> <p>11. The review cycle varies for each interagency agreement. Each relationship should be reviewed on a regular cycle to determine if there needs to be changes.</p> <p><u>Status – Interagency Collaboration</u> One new agreement was completed in 2001 with education, juvenile justice, and correctional education agencies.</p> <p>12. Although the state recognizes conditional licenses for educational personnel, those personnel are considered not fully qualified until they reach the highest standard. The number of “not qualified” personnel increased.</p> <p><u>Status – Personnel Preparation</u> In 2001-02 (& continuing for 2003-03) VDOE expanded opportunities through tuition assistance and grant programs for personnel to become fully qualified in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - early childhood special education - high incidence disabilities - severe disabilities - vision impairment and hearing impairment. 	<p><u>State System Level Structures and Supports</u></p> <p>N. Establish a schedule for regular review and, if necessary, revision of the interagency agreements. Explore new agreements with agencies not currently involved.</p> <p><u>State Systems Level Structures and Supports</u></p> <p>O. Continue to examine personnel licensure reciprocity agreements with other states to determine if increases occur over time.</p> <p>P. Provide flexibility to approved preservice programs. Provide more state support for a variety of creative school-university partnerships and collaborative programs among universities.</p> <p><u>Personnel Issues (recruitment, training and support)</u></p> <p>Q. Collaborate and align with other agencies, localities, and other partners (such as Council for Exceptional Children, National Association of State Directors of Special Education) to address effective special education personnel recruitment and retention activities.</p> <p>R. Support personnel to access newly established preservice programs for endorsement in hearing impairment and vision impairment.</p>	

Baseline Information: Self-Assessment Findings	Improvement Strategies	Evidence of Change and Benchmarks
<p>Effective recruitment strategies and resource information was provided to public school division personnel offices by the Division of Teacher Education & Licensure (NASDTEC, June 2001; VASPA, May 2002). Information was also provided to LEA special education directors (Oct. 2001). State support was provided to LEAs for Web-based recruitment service for 2002-03.</p>		